

The Apostle Peter is the most likely author of the Book of Hebrews

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Of all the New Testament books, the Epistle to the Hebrews is the only one that does not present clear authorship. Despite the fact that the King James Version entitles the book "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews", there is nothing in the text of the epistle to confirm Pauline authorship.

In the past, Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, and Apollos have all been suggested as possible authors. The writing style is also very similar to that of the Old Testament writers Moses and Samuel, but references to Timothy (Hebrews 13:23) and believers in Italy (13:24), and the fact that it is written in the Greek of the First Century A.D., make it highly unlikely that it was written by an Old Testament author.

There are several passages in the book that provide hints as to when the book was written. The epistle appears to be written before the destruction of the Jewish Temple, because passages about the Levites and priests are given in the present tense (7:28). Because of the reference to Timothy, the epistle appears to have been written in the A.D. 60's. It also appears to have been written from Italy (13:24). It is also evidently written to the Jews, though it is unknown what Jewish community it was addressed to in particular.

A close examination of the book reveals a number of reasons why the Apostle Peter is the likely author. The epistles that Peter wrote were written between A.D. 64 and A.D. 67, about the same time that Hebrews was written. Peter is believed to have been writing these epistles in Rome, as he was martyred during the persecution of Caesar Nero in A.D. 68.

The writing style of the book bears many similarities to Peter and a number of clear differences from Paul's writing. In the Pauline epistles, the author repeatedly uses the rhetorical question "know ye not...?". This phrase never appears in Hebrews, and is also absent from Peter's epistles. Another common Pauline expression, "this is a faithful saying", does not appear in Hebrews.

Throughout the Book of Hebrews, the writer uses numerous Old Testament references, showing that Jesus is indeed our great High Priest. In both of Peter's epistles, there are also numerous Old Testament references. One notable aspect of Peter's writing are the numerous references to events and characters found in the Book of Genesis or the Book of Exodus (I Peter 3:6, I Peter 3:20, II Peter 2:4-8, II Peter 2:15, II Peter 3:5-6). We see a similar pattern in the Book of Hebrews, especially in the "Hall of Faith" chapter of Hebrews 11, with examples including early characters such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses; while later heroes of the faith, such as Gideon, Samson, David, and the prophets, are described in much less detail.

Clearly, Hebrews is written to the Jew. It is unlikely that Paul would have addressed the Jews by this time, because the Lord had commissioned Paul to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21, Romans 11:13).

The author of Hebrews had been in prison (10:34), which causes many to believe that the author was Paul. However, Peter was also in prison from time to time, as evidenced in Acts 12, and it is likely that Peter was imprisoned before he was martyred (see John 21:18-19).

In the King James Version, the margin lists 15 cross-references with Peter's epistles in the Book of Hebrews. A comparison of some of these Scriptures shows that the author of Hebrews and the author of Peter's epistles used many of the same examples and wrote about the same subject. Following are some examples:

BOOK OF HEBREWS	PETER'S EPISTLES
(12:1) Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.	(I Peter 2:1) Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.
(12:26-28) Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.	(II Peter 3:10-11) But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall burn with fervent heat?
(6:4-6) For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.	(II Peter 2:20-21) For if they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have know the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them...

Another term that Peter and the author of Hebrews use is "shepherd". That word does not appear in any of the Pauline letters, but it does appear in Hebrews ("that great shepherd of the sheep", Hebrews 13:20).

In conclusion, though we cannot know for certain who the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is, the subject, writing style, and circumstances that it was written under seem to apply to the Apostle Peter more than any of the other New Testament writers.

